

Karen's Kitty by urdearestmom

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Summary:

A short, fluffy piece about Karen featuring Mike and El.

Karen's Kitty

Author's Note:

I read a tumblr post by toxixpumpkin with some prompts and I've decided to write some short one shots. I am going to be writing 5 prompts, so stay tuned for more!

Prompt 1: "I may have accidentally sort of adopted five cats."

Karen Wheeler had always liked cats. However, she had never been able to have one. Growing up, her brother was allergic to them, and once she was married her husband and children took up much of her life. She did not have time to spare for a cat. By the time her son Mike was 16, she had almost forgotten all about her love of kitties. That is, until the day Mike brought home five of them.

As Karen pulled up to her house at the end of Maple Street, she was humming happily. She had just finished her grocery shopping, and was looking forward to having a relaxing Saturday afternoon all to herself. Ted was out golfing (as he was every Saturday, weather-permitting), Nancy had taken Holly to Indianapolis for a day trip since she was visiting from college, and Mike was at the Hendersons a few blocks over with his friends.

Or at least he was supposed to be, Karen remarked to herself as she noticed his bike still leaning against the wall by the back door. When she entered the house, she immediately noticed an almost imperceptible smell: wet fur. It was very faint, as if the source of the smell had passed through a while ago, perhaps an hour. That would have been almost right after she had left to do her errands. It was an odour unfamiliar to the Wheeler household, as the family had never had any pets. Karen could not explain it to herself, so she decided it must have something to do with her son seeing as he was clearly home (she had spotted his spring jacket hanging by the door on her way in).

"Michael? Are you home?" she called.

There was a thump.

It came from the basement, clearly indicating that someone was down there. Her son's voice floated up the stairs.

"Hey, mom! Yeah I'm home!"

Karen deposited her purse on the kitchen counter and made her way towards the door to the basement.

"Why are you home? Weren't you supposed to be at the Hendersons?" she asked.

Mike appeared at the bottom of the staircase. He looked a little embarrassed (or almost as if he'd been caught doing something he shouldn't have been, Karen thought). His hair was ruffled and his shirt soaked through the front.

"Yeah, and I was, but..."

"But what, Michael?"

They were interrupted by a small noise. It sounded like an animal.

"What was that?"

Mike whipped around to face the other side of the basement.

"Shut him up!" he hissed.

Karen furrowed her eyebrows.

"Michael, is there someone else here?"

Mike turned back around almost as quickly as he had the first time. He plastered a horrible smile on his face, proving to Karen what she knew all along: her son was a terrible actor. And a terrible liar too, because she knew he was about to tell her no, mom, there's no one else here, why would you think that?

"Yeah, mom, um El's here too." he said.

Karen's eyebrows suddenly shot up her forehead. She attempted to

peer into the basement but Mike blocked her view.

"Hi, Mrs. Wheeler," sounded the quiet voice Karen had come to know well after so many weekends spent with the girl at her side, learning the ups and downs of the kitchen.

"Hello, El!" Karen said brightly. "What are you two doing down in the basement?"

Karen started down the steps but Mike rushed up and tried to block her from coming.

"Uh, mom, we're kind of in the middle of something important!"

She gave him a look.

"And what could possibly be so important that your mother can't see it?"

Mike nervously ruffled his hair even more. He suddenly looked up at his mother with bashful honesty.

"I, uh- I may have accidentally sort of adopted five cats."

Karen was officially confused. He what?

"You- you adopted five cats? What does El have to do with this?"

Mike backed down the stairs and allowed Karen to enter the basement. When the other end of the large room came into view, she saw Eleven holding a small tabby kitten and four other tabbies rolling around by her feet. To say Karen was shocked was an understatement.

"What is going on, Michael?"

Mike walked towards El, wringing his hands until he stopped to pick up another one of the kittens. He started running his fingers through its fur, similar to what he had done to his hair minutes earlier.

"Well basically, we were all at Dustin's watching Star Wars again-"

Didn't they ever get tired of watching the same movies over and over?

"-but then Dustin got hungry and his mom forgot to buy his favourite Pringles and he didn't want Lays-"

That Dustin sure had a love for food.

"-so he went to the grocery store to get some. He took Will with him and that left El, Lucas, and me, so we decided to go play catch by the creek for a while, which we did-"

"Michael! That is dangerous, you could fall in! What have I told you about going near water, especially now in spring, it's rainy season!" Karen exclaimed.

Mike sighed.

"Mom, please. I think we're old enough to know our way around the creek, and even if we did fall in we all know how to swim so there's no harm."

Karen supposed that was true. They were young men (and sole woman) of 16, they were old enough to handle themselves.

Mike plowed on.

"Anyway, so Lucas had to go the washroom so he left and then it was just me and El. I threw the ball too far for her to catch and it rolled away and she went after it, and then she found these kittens on a trash pile on the edge of the creek, right before it makes the turn near Cherry Street. They were all wet and shivering so we decided to bring them back here and try to help them. So that's how we kind of accidentally adopted five cats."

All while Mike was explaining, Karen noticed Eleven simply listening patiently. Karen had thought that El was observing Mike, but really El was watching her. El had previously been so still that it startled Karen when she came forward with the kitten in her arms.

"Would you like to keep one, Mrs. Wheeler?" she asked softly.

It seemed as though El somehow knew that Karen had always had a soft spot for kitties, and tabbies were one of her favourites. Karen's heart melted as she looked at the little balls of fur that appeared as tumbleweeds rolling across her floor. They were so cute! And she really couldn't say no, not after being asked by El and seeing Mike's petting put his kitten to sleep. This was her chance to finally have a cat.

"Well, I-" she started, but Mike interrupted.

"El, of course we can't keep the cats, I just wanted to help them," he said.

Karen frowned.

"Michael, how many times do I have to tell you that interrupting is rude?"

He seemed to shrink back.

"Sorry, mom."

Karen turned to El.

"Well, I've always wanted to have a cat, but I've never been able to. So of course I'd be delighted to take one! This must be a trick of fate that you two found them and brought them here."

El smiled as Karen reached down to pick up one of the kittens from the floor. As Karen cuddled the small animal, El turned to Mike.

"I told you. I knew she would not mind."

Mike looked at his mother holding the kitten and then back to El.

"I guess you did, huh. How do you always know everything, El?"

She smiled a sly smile.

"I have my ways."

Mike shook his head, grinning. He wrapped his arm around El's

shoulders and headed towards the stairs.

"C'mon, let's get a box to put these cats in. Mom, we're going to take the rest of them to the Byers' and see if Joyce wants one, okay?"

Karen was almost too busy with her new kitten to notice that Mike and El were leaving.

"Of course, honey. Be careful on your way over."

They exited the basement and Karen heard them riffling through the storage cupboards for a suitable box.

She looked down at the young cat playing at her feet. It was only slightly larger than her fist. Karen was overwhelmed by a sudden feeling of excitement at the addition of a very small, furry, family member. Ted was surely going to have a fit when he got home and discovered a cat, but at that moment Karen didn't really care.